

Don't Fall for 'Title Lock' Services. They Are a Waste of Money and Don't Provide Much Protection.

Perhaps you have seen advertisements or received a solicitation to purchase "title lock" service. A reader asked me to find out if it was a scam, so I asked my friends at First Integrity Title to check it out. Here's what I learned.

The premise of the service is that the company monitors your public property information. It is supposed to alert you to changes to your home title (similar to credit monitoring) but is not as helpful or as necessary.

The truth is that it really isn't as easy to steal your home's title as they claim. Also, this is a monitoring service only. There is no "insurance" or help if your title is found to have changed, although Home Title Lock's website does claim to provide a million dollars towards legal fees and costs to defend title from one of these scams. Doing so wouldn't be terribly risky for the company, since the fraud is so rare and so easy to repair legally.

The reason a scammer would pretend to own your home is to

REAL ESTATE
TODAY



By JIM SMITH,
Realtor®

take out a loan against it, pocket the money and disappear. The best target for such fraud would be a home that is owned free and clear. Any lender would require the purchase of title insurance, so if the scammer were successful in fooling a title company to insure that loan, it would be the title company at risk, not you.

Jerry Spaeth, a lawyer and the CEO of First Integrity Title, reported that in 22 years of doing title work, he has never seen a case where someone has been able to "steal" title and then take out a loan, as they claim. And for only \$15 a month, which such services typically charge, it would be difficult to be anything more than a monitoring service.

It is difficult to find out how many such frauds have been committed, because they would be lumped together statistically with wire fraud and identity theft.

The likelihood of needing this service is greater if you have several properties that you own, or if you own your home free and clear

— and if you are elderly. The victim might not be able to receive the letters from the new mortgage company that a payment is late.

Again, you aren't going to be getting support from most title lock services. They are just letting you know if something has taken place.

The title policy you received when you purchased your home does not provide protection for a fraud incident after the purchase of the policy. You can, however, monitor your property on assessment websites to verify that you are still the rightful owner. Every year you should be receiving valuation and tax notices from your county assessor and treasurer. If you don't get such notices, contact

the county to find out why.

If you have a credit monitoring service, as Rita and I do, you would be notified if a new loan is taken out in your name, and a no-cost "credit freeze" with the three credit bureaus would stymie anyone seeking to obtain credit in your name.

In conclusion, title lock service is not necessarily a scam, but it is questionable how useful the service is if there is little or no protection that comes with it.

Remember that Google is your friend. I found some useful information by Googling "title lock protection," including a September 2020 piece from Fox 5 Atlanta calling title lock service a "Waste of Your Money."



We & Our Truck Go the Extra Mile for Clients

Our clients have put a lot of miles on this box truck, saving them thousands of dollars on moving costs. They also get free moving boxes, packing paper and bubble wrap. The truck is also used twice a week by BGoldN to pick up food from Food Bank of the Rockies and by other non-profits, including Family Promise of Greater Denver. We also use it ourselves every couple weeks to take truckloads of polystyrene (aka "Styrofoam," a brand name) to a reprocessing center in Aurora, keeping over 200 cubic yards of the material out of landfills every year. You can bring your block white polystyrene 24/7 to the Styrofoam Corral behind our office.

Real Estate Bidding Wars Are Not Abating

This is my monthly update on the real estate bidding wars. This week I chose to analyze the closings that occurred last **Thursday, June 10th**, to see how the bidding wars have evolved over the past four weeks. The source for this monthly analysis is REcolorado.com, the Denver MLS.

As I did in previous months, I limited my analysis to sales within a 15-mile radius of downtown Denver. I limited my search to homes, condos and townhouses that were on the MLS at least one day and not more than 6 days before going under contract. Those are the homes with bidding wars. I divided the results into homes which sold up to \$500,000 and those that sold for more.

On **June 10th** there were 40 closings up to \$500,000, compared to 44 closings on May 13th. The median home sold for **6.2%** over its asking price, compared to 8.7% on May 13th. **The highest ratio this time was 19.6% for a condo in Golden compared to 15.7% on May 13th for a home in southwest Denver. Only one listing sold for the asking**

price, and only two sold for less than listing price.

There were 37 homes that closed on June 10th for **more than \$500,000**, compared to 56 homes on May 13th. The median home in that group sold for 7.7% over its listing price, compared to 8.1% on May 13th. Only three sold for the listing price, and none sold for less than the listing price. **The highest overbid in this group was 20.9% for a one-story home in Lakewood on June 10 compared to 29.4% on May 13.**

To have a statistically significant number of closings over \$1 million, I analyzed the 82 such closings over a longer period — June 1-13. The median closing for those high-end homes was **6.1%** over listing price, compared to 6.0% in May. Four homes sold for the listing price and 9 homes sold for less than the listing price. **The highest overbid was for a 1979 ranch-style home in Jeffco's Sixth Avenue West subdivision, which was listed at \$1,080,000 and sold in 6 days for \$1,575,000, 45.8% over listing price.**

I'll repeat this analysis on July 15.

Leyden Rock Home Listed by David Dlugasch

Welcome to this fantastic home at **16896 W. 85th Lane** with 180-degree views of the foothills, mountains and downtown Denver. This well maintained home is like new. The open floor plan, views and fireplace makes it a great place to relax. Hardwood flooring adds a luxurious feel to the main level. Enjoy the generous sized office with French doors and the gourmet kitchen with double ovens, gas stove top, quartz counter tops, stainless steel appliances, gorgeous white cabinets, and a bar area. The main floor master suite has fabulous views. The second bedroom boasts a full bathroom and lots of closet space. The dining area off the kitchen has a walkout deck to BBQ and watch the sunset. A powder room and large laundry/mud room with sink and included washer/dryer complete the main level. The finished walk-out basement has another full sized family room and two large bedrooms, one of them with wonderful views. There's a full bath, utility room with plenty of storage space and another large storage area. Take a 3D video tour at www.LeydenRockHome.info, then call David at **303-908-4835** to see it.



Every element of this ad is also posted at GoldenREblog.com

Jim Smith

Broker/Owner, 303-525-1851
Jim@GoldenRealEstate.com
17695 S. Golden Rd., Golden 80401

Broker Associates:

JIM SWANSON, 303-929-2727
CHUCK BROWN, 303-885-7855
DAVID DLUGASCH, 303-908-4835
TY SCRABLE, 720-281-6783
ANDREA COX, 720-446-8674

